

Planning Commission Study Session Meeting Summary

The Planning Commission held a study session on July 10, 2017 in the West Conference Room at the City Hall. Staff provided background on the study of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and described several options staff has analyzed that could potentially allow more homeowners to add an ADU on their properties. Assistant Planner Shila Behzadiaria presented background and the findings of the ADU study, which included spatial analysis using the geographic information systems (GIS), a summary of other cities' ADU requirements, and input received during community outreach meetings and through an online survey.

Planning Commissioners provided the following comments/questions:

- Can existing duplexes in R-2 zone also add an ADU? *Staff response: No, lots in the R-2 zone can only add an ADU if there is currently no more than one dwelling unit (a single-family home) on the lot, for a maximum of two dwellings total.*
- Clarification: if an existing garage is converted into an ADU, the parking spaces eliminated from the garage need to be replaced.
- The owner-occupancy requirement and deed restriction is not an unreasonable requirement. It can protect the property from turning into a duplex rental situation with multiple cars, multiple tenants. Without a deed restriction, it would be very difficult to enforce the owner-occupancy requirement.
- The deed restriction does not negatively impact the property value, home with an ADU was just appraised, and the appraiser did not deduct anything from the property value because of the deed restriction, which is still in effect. This requirement is not intended to limit potential resale of the property, but to address community concerns and maintain primarily owner-occupied, single-family neighborhood character while allowing ADUs.
- The owner-occupancy requirement was adopted at the same time as the ADU ordinance because the City of Sunnyvale historically has made efforts to preserve homeownership and owner-occupancy as the majority tenancy type in the City.
- There is strong interest in having ADUs near transit. Higher density near transit is more desirable than adding more density to the existing single-family neighborhoods.
- The maximum size limit for newly built ADUs (attached or detached) is currently 700 square feet. There is no maximum size for ADUs created by converting existing built space within a home or accessory structure into an ADU.

Members of the public provided the following comments:

- There shouldn't be any minimum lot size for ADUs, especially near transit. Floor area ratio and lot coverage can be used to determine the feasibility of ADU instead of minimum lot size.
- Development of ADUs must be streamlined as much as possible since lack of available and affordable housing is causing a housing crisis in the City.
- The deed restriction requiring owner-occupancy is a liability to the property owner, reduces the value of the property. This prevents the owner of the property from selling it in the future. This requirement is based on community fears about rental properties based on emotion, not facts.